
EMPOWERING WOMEN

A case study of women's participation in political processes in Nakuru county

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Executive Summary

Kenya's 2010 constitution made great strides in increasing the avenues available for public participation amongst Kenyan citizens. This has, in turn, created greater opportunity for women to be involved in the political arena, an area where women are traditionally excluded from. Despite an increase in avenues of participation, women are still unable to fully participate in political life. Looking specifically at Nakuru county in Kenya, we found multiple reasons for this lack of participation and give recommendations for civil society to partner with women and county governments to address the barriers women face when trying to participate in the political arena in Nakuru county.

Key Findings:

♦Networking amongst women is a method to educate each other on politics as well as represent each other when some women are unable to access public participation forums.

♦Civil society is continuing to fill gaps where the county government has been constitutionally mandated to fulfill services such as resource allocation for facilitation as well as civic education.

♦There is no standardization across wards in Nakuru county on how public participation should be approached including dates, times, and locations for participation as well as guidelines to ensure more representative participation of the populace.

♦Resources matter in encouraging participation such as use of a hall, writing materials, and refreshments.

♦Filling constitutionally allocated positions such as village representatives makes the work of ward representatives easier as

well as increasing mobilization of participants.

Key Recommendations:

- ♦ Government officials need to be trained in facilitation of public forums to ensure language is accessible and forums are run as efficiently as possible. Programming should include sensitization to women's issues and needs to combat cultural barriers to women's participation.
- ♦ Having a consistent time and place to meet will allow constituents to plan ahead to attend public participation forums. Currently there is no uniform time, date, or location for forums.
- ♦ There is a great need for civic education amongst women in Nakuru county; women need to know their rights and responsibilities under the new constitution. However, the burden does not rest solely on women. Programming should include sensitization for both men and women to women's issues and needs to combat cultural barriers to women's participation.
- ♦ Civil society and government should encourage women's networking and coalition building provides spaces for women to meet and collaborate. Women have been more effective in advocating for issues or interests identified by them when they are organized and can put pressure stakeholders and politicians.
- ♦ Civil society, private groups, and government should include more young women (18+) in mentee positions by providing internships and opportunities in decision making, leadership, or political positions.
- ♦ Civil society and government agencies need to work across organizations and partner with other local organizations or religious institutions to provide spaces to gather as well as resources.
- ♦ Civil society as well as women groups should seek sponsorship from private organizations to share resources and expertise. E.g. a private company could sponsor a women's or youth's leadership training seminar.

Nakuru County by Numbers

Nakuru covers an area of 7,496.5 square kilometers

1,603,325 people in Nakuru county according to 2009 census

Made up of 11 constituencies:

- ♦ Naivasha, Molo, Nakuru town west, Nakuru town east, Kuresoi north, Kuresoi south, Rongai, Njoro, Gilgil, Subukia, and Bahati

Nakuru County has a total of 73 Members of County Assembly:

- ♦ 55 elected MCAs
- ♦ 18 nominated MCAs

Introduction

Part of the degree requirements for a masters in Development Practice and in Human Rights at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota is a capstone project done in service of a client to contribute to their work. Some clients petition faculty for a project while other projects are created by students in collaboration with a client. This project was created in collaboration with the Center for the Enhancement of Democracy and Good Governance (CEDGG) in Nakuru, Kenya and two students at the Humphrey School—Marin Phelps and Moses Waiswa. This project was built off of a conversation held with Wilkister Akinyi and work done previously by the two students in Kenya where they worked with CEDGG to come up with recommendations for best practices in revenue collection in Nakuru.

This project is seeking to discover the barriers women face in order to participate in the political arena in Nakuru county as well as give recommendations that CEDGG can address with their various partners and stakeholders to empower women and increase their political participation.

The county of Nakuru is located 90 kilometers from Nairobi and is made up of 11 constituencies. Each constituency is served and represented by the members of parliament who are elected and represent the people at the National Assembly. Also, a woman representative is elected and represents the women at the National Assembly. Inside the constituencies they are formed into wards which are represented by the Members of the County Assembly (MCA).

Nakuru is the fourth most populous county after Nairobi, Kiambu, and Kakamega counties. The economic stronghold of the county is the availability of large scale agricultural land for farming, horticulture, and dairy farming. Tourism in Nakuru County is a big economic industry that the county earns from.¹

Kenya's Devolution

Kenya's constitution came into force on 27th of August 2010, replacing a constitution that had been in place since Kenyan Independence in 1963. With over 67% of Kenyans voting for the new constitution, the vote signaled that citizens of Kenya were ready for a new system of governance. The referendum was a culmination of nearly two decades for the struggle for reforms and signaled a shift from a centralized form of government to a devolved system.

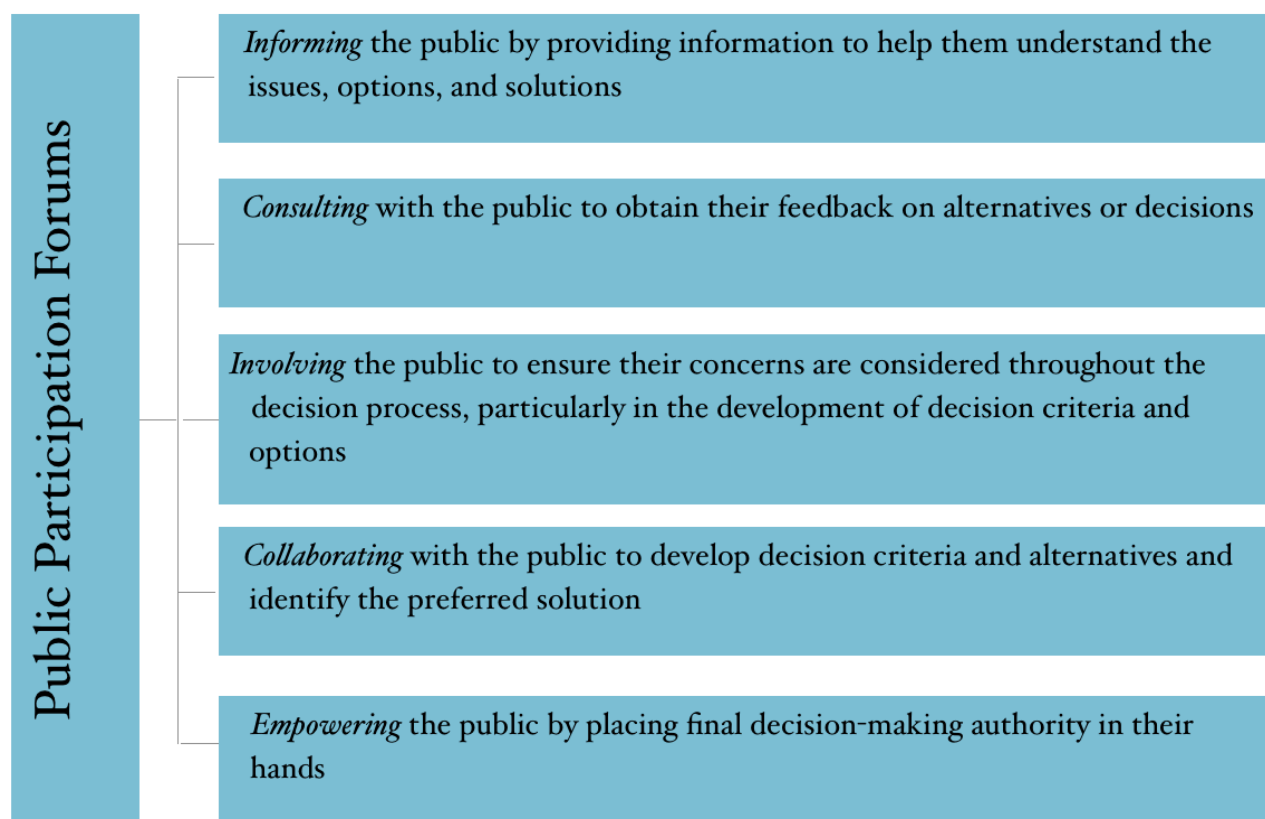
Before the new constitution was adopted all planning and implementation of any programs was under the purview of the central government, based in Nairobi. This was problematic as all power was concentrated in the country's capitol and the top-down approach left a serious gap between citizens and their government. Under the central government system, citizens were not receiving timely nor adequate services; corruption was endemic with no accountability structures; and, citizens had few avenues to voice their grievances. The promise of the new constitution was that government would be more accessible; citizens would have a say in deciding what was best for their communities; and, there would be more accountability from the government.

Constitutional and Legal Foundation for Public Participation in County Government

Public participation is a key ingredient in the 2010 constitution of Kenya. Provisions for public participation can be found under Article 10, and provides a comprehensive list of constitutional and legal provisions related to public participation. Both the legislative and executive branches at the national and county levels are required to participate in monitoring, implementation, and policy making as it pertains to public participation. Additionally, Article 174c gives the citizenry the powers of self-governance and participation. However, the responsibility falls on the state to build capacity, facilitate, and ensure that citizens are full participants in making legislation. The state is responsible for capacity building and ensuring that communities can engage in the political process as is stated in the Constitution.² Figure 1

illustrates the role public participation forums play in educating and informing the public.

Figure 1.



Role of Public Participation Forums

Responsibility to Facilitate Public Participation

The responsibility to facilitate, monitor, and evaluate public participation falls under the purview of the Governor of the County Government under the County Government Act of 2012. This is an act of parliament which operationalizes chapter eleven of Kenya's 2010 constitution which provides for county governments' powers, functions, and responsibilities.³ The Governor is aided by the various agencies that are under him through departments that are spelled out in the constitution. Under the devolved system all sub-county, ward, village, urban, and city areas all work together to facilitate public participation in the county.

In addition to the constitution and the County Government Act of 2012, there is additional legislation which further clarifies the constitutional provision of public participation. Each county in Kenya passes a public finance management act every year in order to, "set the rules for how government at national and

county levels can raise and spend money. Along with the 2010 Constitution, it is the main document that tells the President, MPs, Governors, Senators, County Assembly Members and ordinary people what role they have to play in decisions about how public money is used.”⁴ These acts provide further guidance on the constitutional requirement for public participation by operationalizing it in yearly budget meetings.

The legal provisions that outline the responsibility of county officials are as follows:

- ♦ *Governor*: As per Section 30(3) (g) of the County Government Act, the Governor should promote and facilitate citizen participation in the development of policies, plans, and service delivery in the county.
- ♦ *County Executive Committee*: Section 46(2) (g) of the County Government Act provides that the County Executive committee should bear in mind the need for an all participatory decision making.
- ♦ *Sub-County Administrator*: Under Section 50(3) (g) of the County Government Act, the Sub-county administrator is responsible for the coordination, management, and supervision of the general administrative functions in the sub-county including the facilitation and coordination of citizen participation in the development of policies, plans, and service delivery.
- ♦ *Ward Administrator*: Under Section 51(3) (g) of the County Government Act, the Ward Administrator is responsible for the coordination, management, and supervision of the general administrative functions in the ward including the facilitation and coordination of citizen participation in the development of policies, plans, and service delivery.
- ♦ *Village Administrator*: Under Section 52(3)(a)(I) of the County Government Act, the village administrator is responsible for the coordination, management and supervision of the general administrative functions in the sub-county including ensuring and coordinating the participation of the village unit in governance.
- ♦ *County Assembly*: Article 196 of the Constitution provides that the County Assembly should facilitate public participation and its involvement in its committees, the legislative, and other business of the assembly.
- ♦ *Urban Areas and Cities*: Section 21(i) (g) of the Urban Areas and Cities Act empowers boards of cities and municipalities to ensure that residents participate in decision making in its activities and programs. Section 22 establishes that residents of a city, municipality, or town may actively be involved in policy and law making plus service deliveries in their respective areas.
- ♦ *County Executive Committee member for finance*: Section 125 of the Public Finance Management Act provides the involvement of the public in the budget making process.

Rights and Responsibilities of the Public

Article 174 (c) of the constitution gives the power of self-governance to all Kenyan citizens. The hope is that the constitution enables the public to be more engaged and gives them a seat at the table. However, as citizens have traditionally been divorced from any participatory mechanisms, the need for civic education is a role that the state must take up. The duty of the county to provide civic education is outlined in the County Government Act of 2012. It is hoped that sustained efforts to improve participation will eventually increase capacity as well as prepare communities to combat complex social problems. The public can directly engage with politicians and this improves transparency and creates consensus among different groups.⁵ However, the public also has the duty to know what their rights and responsibilities are as spelled out in the constitution. For example:

- ♦ *Equality*: Article 27 of the Constitution provides that the state shall not discriminate directly or indirectly on any ground. This guarantees equal participation in decision making processes at the county.
- ♦ *Freedom of Expression*: Article 33 of the Constitution guarantees the freedom of expression including the freedom to seek, receive, or impart information or ideas. Hence, every person should feel constitutionally empowered to share information and ideas during public participation processes.
- ♦ *Right to access information*: Article 35 of the Constitution guarantees every citizen the right to access information held by the state. This includes information required for effective public participation.
- ♦ *Planning*: The public should be involved in strategizing, mapping, prioritization, and codification of issues that may be subjected to public participation be they draft policies, legislation, or development plans. Members of the public have the duty from the onset to ensure that what is documented represents issues that are crucial at the most basic unit of the county. After mapping, prioritization, and codification of issues, members of the public should be clear on who the issues are to be addressed to; the county department involved; the statutory period for civic education; and, form of participation.
- ♦ *Organization*: Members of the public may participate in decision making processes as individuals or representative groups. County residents should determine the most effective grouping to engage the county governments. Such organization may be in the form of youth or women's groups, SACCO's (Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations), chambers of commerce, civil society, or religious entities.
- ♦ *Participation*: The public has a duty to fully participate in county civic education initiatives and other processes.
- ♦ *Monitoring and Evaluation*: The public has a duty to monitor and evaluate the implementation of policies, legislation, development plans, citizen's participation, and the civic education process.⁶

Engagement of Women

Article 87 (d) of the Constitution discusses citizen participation and makes clear that citizen participation in county governments should be based on the following principles:

“legal standing to interested or affected persons, organizations, and where pertinent, communities, to appeal from or, review decisions, or redress grievances, with particular emphasis on persons and traditionally marginalized communities, including women, the youth, and disadvantaged communities.”⁷

Kenya's 2010 constitution recognizes barriers that women traditionally face and seeks to correct the imbalance by empowering women to be more engaged in the political process, giving them more agency to make decisions that affect their everyday lives. Women now have a legal mechanism at their disposal to advocate or address issues that affect them through public participation forums. Under the old system, anyone not directly involved in the political process was not involved in the decision-making process, and there were no avenues available to *mwanaïchi*, common people, to voice their grievances. This disproportionately affected women who were excluded from politics due to cultural barriers.

In addition to greater chances for women to participate through forums, there is also greater chance for women to be involved in the political process through becoming representatives. In the 47 newly created counties, each are allocated a women's representative at the National Assembly. Kenya's 2010 constitution also stipulates that no more than two-thirds of any appointed elected body can be of the same gender.⁸ Article 27 (6) states that the state shall take any legislative or other measures to give full effect to the realization of rights guaranteed to women which can include affirmative action programs and policies to redress disadvantage individuals or groups that may have faced past discrimination.⁹ As well as at the national level, women are able to find allocated seats for them at the county level. Nomination of MCAs is done in accordance with set criteria ensures gender parity, inclusion of persons with disabilities, and inclusion of the youth.¹⁰ Women are seeing greater numbers in terms of representation with this new constitution and participation by women in politics has increased, however, there has been little legislation to operationalize many of these constitutional provisions leaving women still unable to fully enjoy the new provisions in the constitution to empower them.

Highlights

“...memberships in parties and voluntary associations are far stronger predictors of participation in Zambia than socio based or more formal forms of civic instruction contain appeals to take part in politics...” Wainaina

“Learning appears to affect not simply someone’s decision whether or not to participate, it also gives them access to information concerning the opportunities and likely results of participation, and equips them with specific sets of skills and understanding associated with citizenship.” pg. 20 Wainaina

Summary of Findings

In the course of the literature review we were able to find resources that had worked on similar issues on women in Kenya and echoed what we found through speaking with participants. Many of them focused on the efficacy of civic education for women and its role in increasing political participation. Civic education has proven effective in imparting political knowledge and has been linked to increasing political efficacy which is defined as, “a person’s self-belief in their own ability to understand politics, be heard, and make a difference politically.”¹¹ There has also been a link between political efficacy and the propensity to vote.¹² Civic education has been shown to have a greater impact on participation than on knowledge, according to studies.¹³ Social networks are also linked to increasing participation—often because individuals are encouraged to participate through these networks.¹⁴

Barriers Identified

- ♦ Illiteracy which is higher in rural areas¹⁵
- ♦ Few women in positions of power (are often nominated in affirmative action positions) to serve as models¹⁶
- ♦ Patriarchal attitudes, even held amongst women, bar women from participating in the political arena¹⁷
- ♦ Impact of societal expectations and stereotypes¹⁸
- ♦ Insecurity and gender-based violence¹⁹

Recommendations Identified

- ♦ Civic education activities had a positive effect on both women’s political knowledge and in political participation.²⁰
- ♦ The most successful civic education is done at the community-level and is sustained with multiple exposures to civic education messages and targets women at all socioeconomic strata.²¹
- ♦ External political efficacy is crucial in predicting women’s likelihood to participate (i.e if women do not perceive that the government will listen to them nor address the problems they experience the less likely women will participate).²²

Findings:

From Women in Nakuru County

“We women intend to fight for our rights from leaders and government officials.”

Overall, we found that women in Nakuru county participated in the political process both formally—through participation in forums and elections—as well as informally through such mechanisms as following political news or participating in associations. Women nearly unanimously reported they had voted in the general elections as well as referendums. They also told us that they were most comfortable participating in forums such as school elections because these overlap with their roles in the family and mostly women attend these meetings. In larger forums with majority male participation, elder women were more comfortable as they were respected in their role as an elder.

Previously, Nakuru county held the majority of their forums at the sub-county level, with numerous wards coming together to discuss development or taxation at an overarching level. The 2016 Public Finance Management Act altered this, however, to a system in which citizens of Nakuru county meet at the ward level. This change seems to have tackled a major issue of accessibility identified in previous work. Women reported that under the new system, they did not have far to walk to reach public forums or elections at the ward-level. However, accessibility remains an issue for forums at higher levels such as those held at the sub-county level.

Timing of forums remains an issue though. Women identified that they had issues finding time to set aside for forums as they can clash with their schedules as workers in the formal and informal market;

Where do women hear about forums and get their political information?

Chief/village elders, church, posters, public announcements, SMS, word-of-mouth, vehicle, Internet

Biashara Ward: topics to be discussed in forum included in announcements

The Tweeting Chief of Kapkures Ward (@ChiefRashid)

The area chief has revolutionized the way citizens receive information through the Twitter-SMS platform. This feature enables those who have subscribed to receive an SMS every time chief Rashid tweets. So far the tweeting chief (as he is popularly known), has 8,000 followers, majority being residents of Kapkures.

Sources of Political Information

TV, radio, telephone, word-of-mouth, political rallies, newspaper, village meetings, organizations

seasonally for agricultural workers; as well as with their household duties. Inconsistency in the length of meetings as well as unpredictability with the start time of forums was also an issue for women. Women reported they would set aside a certain amount of time for forums but often were forced to cut short their participation when the meetings dragged on.

Women in every ward highlighted the fact that they wanted more civic education. Many had a basic knowledge of the constitution and their rights, but it was mainly the articles that affected them and knowledge of their representatives and their roles was lacking. Many women reported that they had never met or seen some of their representatives and they were not sure where they should go or who to go to address specific needs or issues. Come election time, many women expressed they were unsure of who to vote for and what the roles were of the positions they were picking representatives for. Women also expressed they were unsure of who to hold accountable when issues were not addressed.

Barriers Women Face

Women identified several barriers to their ability to participate. Barriers included:

- ✦ Duties related to their gender including household chores and child care;
- ✦ Issues with timing of public participation as it clashed with labor both in the formal and informal market;
- ✦ Language in terms of spoken language and issues with jargon heavy, technical language either inaccessible to some women or does not get fully explained;
- ✦ A lack of consistency in public participation forums in terms of:
 - Politicians arriving late,
 - Forums taking longer than expected,
 - Lack of sufficient reading/writing materials during the participation process;
- ✦ Lack of civic education which would aid women to better understand the process;
- ✦ Apathy because of lack of recognition or respect of women in the role of major decision making.

Analysis

Participation in Networks

We found that many women are involved in some sort of organization, including: political organizations, SACCO's, churches, women's groups (Women's Leagues, Table Banking), community-based organizations. For example, in Kapkures ward there is an organization that specifically advocates on gender issues. Many women said that participation in these networks or organizations enabled them to advocate for their rights more effectively. Government officials mentioned several times in interviews that this kind of participation was a respected means for addressing issues of accessibility; if women are unable to attend

forums they can write petitions, picket for specific issues, or send representatives of a larger group to a meeting.

Effects of Gender

Women continued to highlight that their gender was an issue in being fully respected in forums as well as affecting their ability to participate. Though some women expressed optimism that they were being fully respected now, other women discussed that at meetings their opinions were not respected and that they had problems even being able to voice them. Women even reported facing judgment and shaming from their families and the community for participating. From these gendered effects, women expressed that they felt more comfortable attending and speaking at forums that were more heavily populated by women, such as school elections. It was noted by participants as well as community liaisons that younger women do not participate in forums as much as older women, but when they are over 27 women tend to participate even if they have household responsibilities. This was also reflected in the fact that women were able to find respect from their positions as elders in the community, even in mixed forums.

Women and community liaisons highlighted that government officials in some wards have also taken steps to accommodate issues of gender. For example, community liaisons pointed out Biashara ward as an example for the fact that they not only accommodated the religion of their constituents—by holding forums at both churches and mosques—but made sure there was some separation of genders so that women felt more free in speaking and could follow religious and cultural edicts.

Role of Civil Society and Religious Organizations

Civil society and religious organizations continue to appear to be the main conduits of civic education, empowerment, and facilitators of engagement with the community in Nakuru county. Knowledge levels varied greatly amongst women in Nakuru county, however. Women highlighted that when they did receive civic education it was either through a civil society organization, their mosque or church, or a religious organization. Religious organizations such as Kenya Muslim Youth Alliance and Catholic Justice Peace Commission have their own civic education initiatives.^{23 24} Women also saw religious organizations as more trustworthy sources of information about the government than political organizations or candidates for election.

Women's Relationships to their Government

As discussed in the literature review, an individual's relationship to their government has a great impact on their desire to participate in civic life.²⁵ In speaking to women in Nakuru county about their views of the government, we heard mixed opinions. Some women were aware of where to go to address issues, knew who their representatives were, and even felt that topics discussed at forums were relevant to them. As we learned from women, community liaisons, and ward representatives, some wards have even made the effort to gender mainstream by making sure there is a mix of men and women represented amongst elders in the community. Women in one ward expressed optimism about their ward representatives, noting that many forums were relevant and geared towards their needs and were organized in such a way that made them feel that everybody's opinions count.

However, women expressed skepticism and indicated that they refused to be used for political reasons. Women we spoke to in every ward also expressed frustration in that decisions in forums could be altered at the County Assembly level and that decisions often took a long time to be implemented. Women told us that they felt that if something as serious as a lack of health care was not being addressed, they questioned whether smaller grievances would be given enough weight and respect to be fixed. In the forum setting, women reported, they were shut down by politicians and other males in the audience. The culmination of these frustrations was apathy expressed by the women—many of whom acknowledged they had stopped showing up as a result. Community contacts also expressed to us that success by some wards was mainly due to the efforts of civil society, churches, mosques, and religious organizations bridging the divide between community members and government.

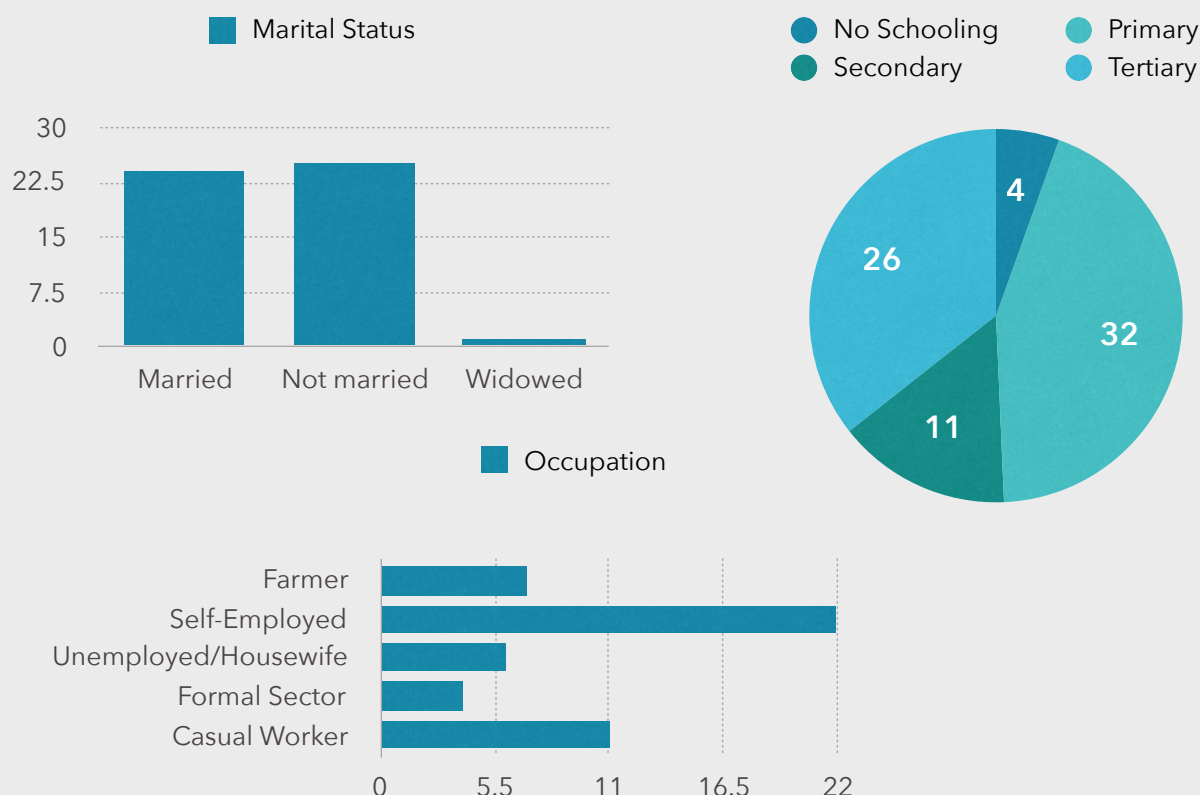
Demographics of Women Interviewed

n=50, from four wards in Nakuru county

Age range: 18-67

Household: All reported having children or members of extended family living with them with an average of 5 members per household

Wealth: All but three women reported that they had enough income to meet their basic needs and identified themselves as the breadwinners



Findings:

Government officials in Nakuru County

In the course of our research we spoke with five ward administrators (two men and three women) and three female MCAs. These government officials spoke with us about their efforts they are undertaking to carry out the constitutional provision of public participation via forums. They reported to us that they are given the authority to conduct forums however there are no quotas or other means of guidance to ensure that certain groups of people—such as women—are fairly represented. Officials said they are utilizing all the measures captured by women above to announce public participation forums. However, officials report that they have issues in mobilizing crowds and fail to encourage women to participate in particular. In some wards, positions such as village chiefs—which are outlined in the constitution—have been filled and the people working in these positions often serve as middle-men by ward administrators in mobilizing participants.

Fiscal year 2016/2017 marked a departure in how public forums in Nakuru county were held—now most forums are held at the ward level. Forums previously were held at the sub-county level making accessibility difficult for the majority of constituents.

What are Ward Administrators and What Do They Do?

Under Section 51(3) (g) of the County Government Act, the ward administrator is responsible for the coordination, management and supervision of the general administrative functions in the ward including the facilitation and coordination of citizen participation in the development of policies, plans, and service delivery.

Their Roles in Their Words

Ward Administrators: organize the meetings, guide people on how to behave in meetings, set priorities for communities on development projects, interact with people, resolve issues.

Ward Administrators...

Are competitively appointed by the County Public Service Board after a general election and must have a minimum of a degree from a recognized institution in Kenya.

In Nakuru County...

There are a total of 55 ward administrators.

Barriers Women Face as Identified by County Officials

County officials also gave us input on what they believed were barriers women faced in order to participate in the political process. Officials said that women:

- ✦ Have other issues facing them that takes away time/attention from participating in the political process which includes poverty, violence, and insecurity;
- ✦ Are hesitant to participate due to the patriarchy and do not think they have a voice or a place within the political process;
- ✦ Are often intimidated in forum settings if there is a quorum against them as men are able to network and debate outside of forums informally and come into forums with ideas already settled leaving little room for discussion or input from others;
- ✦ Need more civic education so they can:
 - ✦ Have courage to speak confidently in forums,
 - ✦ Negotiate with husbands or jobs in order to attend forums and learn to prioritize their civic duties,
 - ✦ Write memos to make requests if they are unable to attend,
- ✦ Should build networks amongst themselves to discuss issues and educate each other as well as find representatives if they are unable to attend.

Challenges County Officials Face in Encouraging Participation

We asked government officials what they have identified as issues they encounter in encouraging the political participation process. These are general issues but have a more profound affect on women. Government officials told us that they:

- ✦ Would like training on facilitating group meetings as crowds can become large or unruly necessitating efficient facilitation;
- ✦ Face issues with mobilizing crowds for forums;
- ✦ Want people to be informed of the procedures and agenda of the forum in advance to make forums more efficient;
- ✦ Want their constituents to be educated by someone in an official role as community educator on the importance of attending forums, their constitutional rights, and law making procedures;
- ✦ Want the county executive government to act in a way that makes their actions understandable to common people;
- ✦ Want communication from the executive government to be more timely, clear, and open.

Analysis

The Need for Civic Education

The most common issue that government officials brought up in interviews was the need for further civic education amongst civilians and especially amongst women. Not only are many people unaware of their basic rights under the constitution, but many are still understanding government through the framework of the old government and fail to see the importance of participation. Ward administrators told us that people still think that it is the duty of leaders to bring ideas and the people are told what is happening. This is what happened in the old government, further emphasizing the fact that there is a need for civic education in Nakuru county. The people also tend to see government officials in the savior role. Somewhat against the views of the people, ward administrators stressed that participation is necessary in order for the county government to work.

Civil society has been key in fulfilling the educational needs of civilians in Nakuru county, teaching them about their rights and obligations and how they should interact with government officials both in and out of the forums. Ward administrators told us how civilians are still unsure of what to do but civil society, such as CEDGG, has helped educate them and helped them understand various avenues in which to petition for requests such as through memos.

Though the women themselves also identified strongly the need for civic education, we felt that there ought not be an over reliance on civilians to educate themselves; some of these gaps highlighted throughout our analysis could benefit from further intervention from the government officials themselves.

Balancing their Roles

Ward administrators spoke to us about the difficulties they encounter in their jobs—many of them stemming from a lack of resources, both in terms of monetary and in terms of human resources. Unfortunately, not all positions outlined by the 2010 constitution have been created or filled in Nakuru county, leaving ward administrators to fulfill many roles. For those wards in Nakuru county that have retained some positions that existed under the old constitution or filled constitutionally allocated positions, these roles have allowed ward administrators to get information down to lower levels faster and more consistently. Ward administrators are also ensuring a balance of genders amongst the constitutionally allocated position of village elders. This has resulted in a better representation of women in forums.

In order to better reach the people, some ward administrators are innovating. For example, one female ward administrator uses WhatsApp, the social media application, throughout her ward as a platform for her constituents to air their grievances, make requests, and communicate information about forums. She said, “I came to realize that in interacting with this community is when you get the information. And interacting with the community means they won’t fear you—they’re even able to reach out to you and tell you a certain problem.”

Ward administrators also spoke to us about the challenges they face in their roles as representatives of the county government. They spoke to us about how they have to be very conscious of how they speak to people in their roles, careful not to promise anything that cannot be delivered. With delays in completion of projects and issues with funding, ward administrators told us that if they fail their constituents, the constituents begin to lose confidence in the government as a whole. As we learned from the literature review and the women we surveyed, loss of confidence in government can spell the end of public participation for some women.

Lack of Resources to Facilitate Forums

Second to the need for more civic education, ward administrators discussed the issue of lack of resources as a major constraint in their ability to facilitate public participation. Officials told us that many wards do not have county-owned public facilities to hold forums which necessitates renting tents, halls, chairs, or other necessary supplies. There are limited funds which are disbursed across wards and sometimes several wards will hold forums together so that only one hall, tent, or other resources must be acquired. Ward administrators told us that the use of incentives—such as a beverage—attracts larger crowds, yet with limited funds available for facilitation this is often not an option.

In order to fill this resource gap, civil society has stepped up. Ward administrators told us that civil society organizations, such as CEDGG, have helped with incentives like water as well as resources for facilitating, such as tents and chairs. They have also been helpful in training county officials in facilitating forums.

This lack of resources leaves a gap for outsiders to build coalitions through the use of incentives. These coalitions can disrupt forums or even pressurize a specific point leaving the political process unequal amongst citizens. However, ward administrators are aware of the issue of coalitions and have been given the authority in order to bar them from the forums.

Difficulties in Mobilizing Women and other Vulnerable Groups

Ward administrators spoke to us about the difficulty of getting full representation of their constituents. In order to accommodate as many people as possible, ward administrators have tried changing the dates and times of the forums but say they still face issues of accommodation. In the end, those represented amongst the forums are—as described by one ward administrator—those with nothing better to do. This leaves women and workers (both in the formal and informal sectors) who are unable to leave their duties shut out of the political process.

Officials told us that women have very low participation levels however, ward administrators said they believe that the women who attended represented the majority of women in their wards. Several barriers outlined by both the women of Nakuru county and county officials stand as a means of barring women from participating fully. Low levels of participation amongst women stood common across all of the wards we spoke to. Many ward administrators are making an effort to accommodate women. For example, one ward administrator often sits amongst the people during the forums and will take notes and even raise her hand to raise an issue she has heard. Ward administrators are also making an effort to reach out

to women in their wards so that they can speak to them in their offices if they are unable or unwilling to speak at the forums.

Disabled individuals, according to ward administrators, also had low participation in political forums. Accessibility is an issue in reaching forums; locations for forums are changed making mobility for disabled individuals difficult and resources which could pay for a sign language interpreter or other mechanisms to accommodate individuals with disabilities are already scarce. However, when these individuals are able to attend, according to officials, their requests are given special consideration and they are given as much accommodation as possible.

Besides from women and people with disabilities, those from lower classes also faced difficulties in speaking at and accessing forums. Several ward administrators told us that they felt those from lower classes had poor self-esteem, believing that they would not be listened to and that forums were only for people of a certain class. The ward administrators told us that only people of a certain class are interested in seeing development in their wards yet will only come to forums in order to advocate for certain projects that interest or benefit them.

Experiences of Women in the Political Process

With the onset of the 2010 constitution, allocated seats for women in politics were put in place increasing the rate of women in politics. Despite these allocated seats, women still face difficulties in accessing politics. We heard from one woman vying for political office how her involvement has caused people to degrade her. She told us that women who run for political office are treated badly and are often called prostitutes, slandered by saying they have many men, and that they are not fulfilling their roles as mothers and wives and ignore their families. In addition to the general society perceiving women in politics negatively, the women we spoke to also told us that women themselves are hesitant to support other women in roles of authority.

One woman MCA from Nakuru county spoke directly to us about the experiences of women in politics in her county. She discussed the need for more training for women concerning leadership and the acceptance of women in politics. She was optimistic that the current system can be improved to include women and increase women's participation in politics. She also mentioned that as a woman leader, the training she has undertaken has been facilitated by other women's organizations and non-governmental organizations and she has received a lot of support from other women in governmental positions that helped her.

Use of Associations as a Go-Between for Women

Like the women in their wards, ward administrators also highlighted to us the positive role associations or networks could play for women and others who are disenfranchised, and their ability to participate in forums or politics. In one ward, the ward administrator encourages the use of groups to have a chairperson or representative who is able to attend forums and represent the issues of their groups. This ward administrator highlighted how this was especially helpful for business people who are often unable to take time away from work to attend. Associations or networks were also key in the recruitment process of making sure more women would attend public participation forums.

Findings:

Civil society in Nakuru County

Civil society organizations have been instrumental in providing resources and informing the public of their rights and responsibilities, which has been welcomed by most politicians. What this has meant for constituents is that they are better equipped to advocate for themselves and feel more empowered to tackle community issues. Citizens also turn to civil society organizations when they have problems in their communities and it is these groups that inform and relay information to politicians and government agencies.

Analysis

Gap Filling

Civil society has played a crucial role in educating and advocating for the public during the transition from a central to a devolved government. We repeatedly heard from politicians that it was tough to coordinate these public participation forums with little to no resources. Politicians spoke about not having enough writing materials or handouts for attendees, and some constituents are forced to spend hours outside exposed to the elements because there is no dedicated hall where they can gather. CEDGG for example has provided tents, hired chairs, trainings, and drinking water for constituents at public participation forums. CEDGG has also helped citizens by teaching them how to write memos in order to articulate their needs in a compelling way.

Issues with Government Transparency

Often politicians do not release information promptly, and this does not give constituents enough time to disseminate vital information that affects their lives. Politicians being tardy has been very problematic, CEDGG is advocating for the introduction of a bill that would ensure that the public would have enough time to consume and debate any proposed legislation. Politicians in Nakuru have been known to introduce a complicated piece of legislation and expect the public to make a decision without providing enough copies of the proposal nor explaining the nuances of the proposal. Other issues related to transparency include:

- ✦ Public participation meetings are described to the public as informational meetings and are not told that they have the choice to alter the documents in question;
- ✦ Protests because instead of hearings being held locally, the hearings are held in the capital only and often only advertised in the newspaper, which is not accessed by everyone. The method of communication is very important for public involvement;
- ✦ Lack of ownership and involvement by government officials in service delivery because they see themselves as separate;
- ✦ County should hire people for municipal boards. The municipal board would be in charge of educating people in service delivery. The municipal board would have people from civil society, private sector, *mwanainchi*, and professionals;

- ♦ Taking attendance at public participation forums to use as proof of attendance can be problematic especially when politicians have been known to disregard constituents wishes and champion other legislation that has not been discussed.

Recommendations

Increasing Public Participation amongst Women

The drafters of new constitution included public participation as a way to bring government closer to the people. Traditionally politicians made decisions on behalf of the citizenry, but now the people have a greater say in issues that directly affect them. Women have a unique opportunity to voice their concerns and now have agency to advocate for their issues. Frameworks have been put in place to enable women to become active participants in the political process despite traditional patriarchal hierarchies. From our research and interviews we have identified recommendations that will increase women's participation.

- ✦ Government officials need to be trained in facilitation of public forums to ensure forums are run as efficiently as possible and prioritize the needs and voices of marginalized people like women. Programming should include sensitization to women's issues and needs to combat cultural barriers to women's participation.
- ✦ Uniform language delivery in forums should be utilized. This would include using less technical language so that what is discussed at forums can be universally understood.
- ✦ Having a consistent time and place to meet will allow constituents to plan ahead to attend public participation forums. Currently there is no uniform time, date, or location for forums.
- ✦ There is a great need for civic education amongst women in Nakuru county. Women need to know their rights and responsibilities under the new constitution; the roles and responsibilities of all public servants that represent them; and, understand how government works so they can utilize processes to advocate for their interests. However, the burden does not rest solely on women. Programming should include sensitization for both men and women to women's issues and needs to combat cultural barriers to women's participation.
- ✦ Civil society should continue to work with government officials in order to educate them on the barriers women face in order to participate. Politicians need to stop discouraging women by blaming women's lack of participation on women and a lack of civic education.
- ✦ Civil society and government should encourage women's networking and coalition building provides spaces for women to meet and collaborate as well as become more active politically. Women have been more effective in advocating for issues or interests identified by them when they are organized and can put pressure stakeholders and politicians.
- ✦ Civil society, private groups, and government should include more young women (18+) in mentee positions by providing internships and opportunities in decision making, leadership, or political positions.
- ✦ Civil society and government agencies need to work across organizations and partner with other local organizations or religious institutions to provide spaces to gather as well as resources.

- ♦ Civil society as well as women groups should seek sponsorship from private organizations to share resources and expertise. E.g. a private company could sponsor a women's or youth's leadership training seminar.
- ♦ Government institutions and civil society should conduct social audits including score carding service delivery in public institutions, and share reports with one another. This will provide another feedback mechanism in which constituents, especially women who have traditionally been excluded from political processes, can be empowered to raise concerns and see them addressed.

Methodology

In researching the question of increasing women's participation in Kenya's newly devolved government structures, we built on the knowledge we had developed during our Summer 2016 Humphrey School Field Experience, when we and three other Humphrey School students examined best practices for revenue collection under the newly devolved constitution for CEDGG. During the course of that study, we met Wilkister Akinyi, of CEDGG, who was seeking to increase women's participation in local structures. We agreed to undertake a study of best practices and provide recommendations.

Work on the project began in November 2016 with a review of the literature on the subject of enhancing women's civic education and engagement. We then developed a survey tool based on what we learned from the literature, from our previous work in Kenya, and from a survey of the effects of civic education on women's political participation done in Kenya by Wainaina Kamau in 2013.²⁶

We collected data over a week-long period in January 2017, facilitated by partners at CEDGG. We spoke to a total of 50 women from four different wards in Nakuru county. Women were recruited through community liaisons who were prominent and trusted members of their wards and had been utilized by CEDGG in the past for mobilizing individuals for other purposes. Interviews were held in a focus group setting where there was a maximum of 12 women in attendance. Throughout the focus groups, facilitators would ensure that every woman had a chance to answer each question and that each answer was recorded on paper. No identifying information was gathered on these women—and they were made aware of that fact.

We also spoke to four ward administrators and utilized data from our previous study. Contact with ward administrators was facilitated by CEDGG and the focus groups were selected from the same wards as the administrators in order to cross-examine data gathered. Interviews with ward administrators were recorded and later transcribed by the students utilizing a website www.otranscribe.com. We chose not to code data as there was not enough material to make it statistically significant and chose to take a more qualitative approach with analysis of the information.

Through CEDGG's facilitation we were able to gain the trust of the women and ward administrators; our previous work in the county also helped participants gain familiarity with us.

Some of the strengths the approach used is that we were already familiar with Nakuru and its politics and the area of the study; we had previously worked with the organization easing interactions; we also had data from a previous study that was able to supplement the data collected for this study.

Weaknesses in this study include the nature of the study being very qualitative; the sample size was small though was supplemented with previous data; the geographic area included was small and did not sample into more rural areas; the time the students were able to collect data in Nakuru was very short; the students were limited in the amount of civil society organizations we could talk to.

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